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French court rules France not doing enough on climate change

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Body

PARIS - France's government is at fault for not doing enough to combat climate change, a French court said on Wednesday, in what environmental campaigners called a landmark ruling that could ramp up pressure on other countries to act on global warming.

The case was brought by four non-governmental organizations (NGOs) who accused the French state of not living up to its own commitments - including a multi-year plan to cut carbon emissions - or to the 2015 Paris Climate accord.

In its ruling, the Administrative Tribunal of Paris said there were "wrongful deficiencies on the part of the state in implementing public policies to allow it to achieve objectives it had set on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions."

Reacting to the ruling, government spokesman Gabriel Attal said that although the government was making huge efforts to catch up, it was fair to say France had been late in addressing global warming.

"I share in that observation, and we are responding, and those who urge the state to go further should make proposals so we can reach these objectives and go even further," he told a regular briefing for reporters.

Cécile Duflot, Executive Director of Oxfam France, one of the NGOs that brought the case, called Wednesday's decision "a historic victory for climate justice."

"For the first time, a French court has ruled that the state can be held responsible for its climate commitments," she said, adding that the ruling was "a timely reminder to all governments that actions speak louder than words."

The court ruled that the NGOs which brought the case suffered moral damage as a consequence of the state's slow action on climate change. It ordered the state to pay them each the symbolic amount of one euro in compensation.

In Brussels on Wednesday, the European Union's top court ruled that Hungary had "systematically and persistently" breached legal limits on air pollution from particulate matter, in some regions for as long as 12 years. (Reporting by Christian Lowe and Elizabeth Pineau; editing by John Stonestreet) !@COPYRIGHT=© 2021 Postmedia Network Inc. All rights reserved.

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